

The Monitor

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Special Edition

Dear Readers,

We'd like to update you on the troubling global increase in anti-Semitism, which we have observed in the wake of the most recent conflict in Gaza. The recent increase highlights the persistent public conflation, including in Europe, of Jewish people with the State of Israel and its policies, manifesting an entrenched anti-Semitism that threatens the viability of Jewish communities.

We take very seriously such aggressive rhetoric and actions directed against Jewish populations, vigorously countering it wherever and whenever it arises. Furthermore, we unequivocally condemn any attacks on houses of worship or individuals based on their religious affiliation.

Similarly, while criticism of Israel cannot automatically be regarded as anti-Semitic, rhetoric that demonizes, delegitimizes, or applies double standards to Israel crosses the line of legitimate criticism.


Earlier this month, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said that the conflict in Gaza should not be an excuse for anti-Semitic slurs and attacks. He "deplores the recent upsurge in anti-Semitic attacks, particularly in Europe, in connection with protests concerning the escalation of violence in Gaza," according to a statement by his spokesman.

Officials throughout the State Department and the U.S. government regularly speak out against anti-Semitism. We remain in regular contact with Jewish communities across the world. I have traveled to 17 countries over the past year to urge governments and civil society to speak up and speak out whenever and wherever anti-Semitism and other forms of religious intolerance occur.

Thank you for your continued interest and support of our work. As always, you can find further updates on my work to combat anti-Semitism around the world at @SEASForman on Twitter.

Ira Forman



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U.S. Response

Since May of 2013 Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism (SEAS) Ira Forman and the SEAS team have travelled widely in Europe and beyond to consult closely with Jewish leaders on their security, and urge government officials to speak out against anti-Semitic acts and to take appropriate action when they occur. In recent weeks, the SEAS team has constantly engaged leaders of beleaguered Jewish communities to assess conditions on the ground and identify opportunities for advocacy with foreign governments. Special Envoy Forman has also briefed Jewish groups – both domestic and international – to gather and relay fast-breaking information.

We are also working closely with our Embassies who in turn have reached out through diplomatic channels regarding anti-Semitic acts and offensive anti-Semitic rhetoric, and encouraged governments to speak out forcefully and provide security to Jewish communities. Our SEAS office in Washington, DC, with support from U.S. Embassies, has reached out to governments to express concern about the recent surge in anti-Semitic acts and rhetoric.

We will continue to monitor and engage bilaterally and multilaterally to protect the welfare of Jewish communities overseas.

As National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice [remarked](#) on July 28, 2014, “[We] see anti-Semitism flaring up around the world, including in Europe. The pretext is the passions coming out of the current conflict, but we all know it has its roots in something ancient and ugly—and we should not shy away from calling it by its name.”



Special Envoy Forman with Jewish leaders in the Netherlands in March 2014 (State Department photo)

Reactions by European Governments

We are heartened that the Secretary General of the United Nations and many European governments and religious groups have denounced recent anti-Semitic rhetoric and actions and have taken steps to reassure local Jewish communities. However, we continue to urge more widespread condemnation of anti-Semitic rhetoric and violence by governmental and civil society leaders throughout the parts of the world where anti-Semitic behavior is particularly pronounced.

An example of strong condemnation of anti-Semitism is the joint statement issued by the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and Italy, which condemned “outrageous anti-Semitic statements, demonstrations and attacks.” Other positive steps by foreign governments include:

- French President Hollande firmly condemned attacks against two synagogues in Paris that followed a pro-Palestinian rally, as did Prime Minister Valls, Paris mayor Hidalgo, and several human rights and anti-racism groups. Police arrested nine people in the Paris prefecture. Interior Minister Cazeneuve instructed prefects to “redouble their vigilance.”
- The British Archbishop of Canterbury condemned anti-Semitic violence on July 30, saying it was acceptable to criticize Israeli policies, but not to attack Jews.
- German President Gauck reassured the President of the Central Council of Jews of his solidarity and called on all Germans to speak out against anti-Semitism. German law enforcement has stepped up protection for Jewish communities. Foreign Minister Steinmeier publicly affirmed a “zero tolerance for anti-Semitism in Europe.”
- The Mayor of Rome said swastikas and other anti-Jewish graffiti were “shameful and offensive to all Romans.” Italian authorities have apprehended three individuals suspected of anti-Semitic vandalism.
- Prime Minister Rutte signed on August 4 a joint statement with Jewish groups rejecting anti-Semitism and Foreign Minister Timmermans wrote in an August 5 op-ed that there is no place for anti-Semitism during Gaza demonstrations in the Netherlands. The mayor of The Hague met with Jewish groups to hear their concerns, and the Rotterdam mayor is to organize an inter-faith discussion.
- The Danish political establishment quickly condemned anti-Semitic remarks by Imam Abu Bilal Ismail’s and questioned whether he should be allowed to remain in Denmark.

Background: Anti-Semitic Rhetoric and Attacks

Throughout the summer of 2014, anti-Israel demonstrations, stoked by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, sometimes produced anti-Semitic rhetoric and violence. Some European Jews are fearful and increasingly consider emigrating to Israel. Acts of aggression since the beginning of the current conflict in Gaza include:

- In France, Jewish community leaders lauded the government's strong response, but protestors nonetheless looted Jewish shops and attacked eight synagogues in two weeks.
- In the United Kingdom, the Community Security Trust recorded 130 anti-Semitic incidents in July – the highest monthly total since January 2009, which coincided with another period of conflict in Israel and Gaza.
- In Germany, demonstrators chanted anti-Semitic slogans at pro-Palestinian rallies. Other demonstrators threw Molotov cocktails at a synagogue in the town of Wuppertal. The Imam at a Berlin mosque called for extinguishing Israel and called Jews the “slayers of the Prophet,” adding, “destroy them to the last.”
- In Italy, vandals painted numerous swastikas and other anti-Jewish graffiti on shops and walls in Rome's oldest Jewish neighborhood. The San Giovanni neighborhood was defaced with more than 70 disturbing messages and posters.
- In the Netherlands, demonstrators in at least three pro-Palestinian marches voiced anti-Semitic rhetoric, unleashing a wave of anger from the Jewish community when the government failed to intervene.
- In Belgium, a demonstrator chanted “slaughter the Jews” over a loudspeaker.
- In Turkey, media and public figures, citing overwhelming empathy for Gaza, directed inflammatory language toward Israel. Prime Minister Erdogan pledged to keep Turkey's Jewish citizens safe, but said some Israeli actions “surpassed Hitler in barbarism” and urged Turkey's Jewish leaders to denounce Israel.
- While visiting Germany on July 11, Danish Imam Abu Bilal Ismail called for the killing of Jews during his sermon in a Berlin mosque.

We are shocked by reports of Jews being harassed, threatened, and discriminated against, Jewish clergy being physically attacked, and the widespread use of anti-Semitic rhetoric in press and on social media, including by prominent cultural figures:

- In South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) issued a statement on July 10 in which it implied that Israel's actions were comparable to those of Nazi Germany and accused Israel of turning the West Bank and Gaza into “permanent death camps.” A subsequent statement on July 31 noted, however, the ANC's “unequivocal condemnation of any form of hate speech including antisemitism.”

- The President of Bolivia, Evo Morales, declared Israel a state sponsor of terror and condemned Israeli operations in Gaza as an act of genocide, though no anti-Semitic acts have been noted.
- Since the escalation of the Middle East conflict, the Chilean government has been critical of the government of Israel. However, it has denounced anti-Semitism in protests and has taken steps to protect its Jewish population. Since July, the Jewish community in Chile has reported incidents of anti-Semitic graffiti, bomb threats, and stones thrown at homes.
- Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said "let the voice of the Jewish people across the world rise to repudiate this slaughter against the Palestinian people in Gaza." He added that "[the Israeli government does not] mind killing children, women, innocent men...their war is to exterminate the Palestinian people so they disappear from the face of the earth" and that the conflict in Gaza was "a war of financial, military, media power conducted by global capitalism to seize the land of Palestine and exterminate the Palestinian people."
- In Australia, a group of teenagers boarded a bus of Jewish primary schoolchildren in Sydney and unleashed an anti-Semitic stream of abuse and threats at them. Weekly anti-Israel rallies in Sydney have been noticeable for their overt anti-Semitic expressions.
- In New Zealand, human rights and race relations commissioners are making a stand against hate attacks targeting the Jewish community. Recently, however, anti-Semitic rhetoric has marred the run-up to parliamentary elections.
- The rabbi of the Jewish community in Casablanca, Morocco, was beaten in July, as he walked to synagogue, allegedly because of Israel's operation in Gaza. The police arrested the attacker shortly after the incident.

Beyond these recent developments, we are also concerned about an upswing of anti-Semitism in Europe over the past few years. We have previously reported that we have seen a pattern of rising anti-Semitism in Europe and heightened concerns expressed by Jewish communities in recent years. The European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) survey of perceptions of anti-Semitism among Jews in eight member states (Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom), released in November 2013, found that in some countries as many as 48 percent of the local Jewish population had considered emigrating because of anti-Semitism. One-third of survey respondents had experienced some form of anti-Semitic harassment over the past five years, with 26 percent experiencing verbal assault or harassment (because they were Jewish) over the last 12 months, 4 percent reporting physical violence, and 23 percent saying they occasionally avoid Jewish events or sites because they do not feel safe.

Online Outreach

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HumanRights.gov



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